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SIPDIS

STATE FOR NEA, NEA/IPA, NEA/PPD

WHITE HOUSE FOR PRESS OFFICE, SIT ROOM  
NSC FOR NEA STAFF

SECDEF WASHDC FOR USDP/ASD-PA/ASD-ISA  
HQ USAF FOR XXXX  
DA WASHDC FOR SASA  
JOINT STAFF WASHDC FOR PA  
USCINCENT MACDILL AFB FL FOR POLAD/USIA ADVISOR  
COMSOCEUR VAIHINGEN GE FOR PAO/POLAD  
COMSIXTHFLT FOR 019

JERUSALEM ALSO FOR ICD  
LONDON ALSO FOR HKANONA AND POL  
PARIS ALSO FOR POL  
ROME FOR MFO  
E.O. 12958: N/A  
TAGS: [IS](#) [KMDR](#) [MEDIA](#) [REACTION](#) [REPORT](#)  
SUBJECT: ISRAEL MEDIA REACTION

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SUBJECTS COVERED IN THIS REPORT:  
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- [1](#)1. Mideast
- [1](#)2. Aftermath of Hurricane Katrina

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Key stories in the media:  
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U.S. Ambassador to Israel Dan Kurtzer was quoted as saying in a farewell interview broadcast this morning on Israel Radio that the U.S. administration is still waiting for the dismantling of settler outposts ("We have no reason to believe that Israel will evade its responsibility.") Kurtzer also said that, in the wake of Hurricane Katrina, it would be up to Israel to decide whether to postpone its request for aid for the Negev and the Galilee. (Yediot reported that on Thursday, a special Finance Ministry and Prime Minister's Office delegation that was supposed to leave for the U.S. in ten days to discuss Israel's aid request canceled its trip.) Regarding Israel's weapons sales to China, Kurtzer said that it has taken some time for Israel to understand that the U.S. is a "two-ocean power." As in other interviews, Kurtzer expressed his optimism, despite the fact that his term in the country was marred by terror. Ambassador Kurtzer was quoted as saying in an interview with Ha'aretz's Aluf Benn that implementation of the disengagement was "just remarkable." In the interview, Kurtzer praised Sharon for his "incredible decision." Kurtzer told Ha'aretz and Maariv that, as he left Israel in the mid-1980s, he told a friend that Sharon was the person he thought most likely to bring about peace in Israel. The Ambassador told Maariv that the understandings reached between Sharon and President Bush regarding the settlement blocs are clear and have been adopted by the U.S. Congress.

All major media, except Maariv, led with the last stages of Israel's disengagement from the Gaza Strip. The media reported that the High Court of Justice ruled on Thursday that the synagogues there can be destroyed. Leading media reported that the government is delaying the demolition, as Defense Minister Shaul Mofaz is objecting to it.

Ha'aretz reported that Israel is preparing for the creation of an extensive system of border crossings and terminals for the passage of people and goods from and into the territories. According to the newspaper, when it is completed, it will consist of 36 crossing points between Israel and the West Bank and two or three between Israel and the Gaza Strip. Israel Radio reported that this morning, Israel, the PA, and Egypt, will start operating joint coordination headquarters of the pullout at Kerem Shalom.

Ha'aretz (Amir Oren) discusses the enmity IDF leadership allegedly feels toward U.S. security coordinator Lt. Gen. William Ward. IDF leaders are said to perceive him as having fallen in love with the Palestinians.

Ha'aretz reported that on Thursday, a Palestinian was killed and another wounded by IDF gunfire in an attempt to infiltrate the evacuated Gaza Strip settlement of Atzmona. Yediot reported that the Sharon communities, including Kfar Sava, Hod Hasharon, and Kochav Yair, are demanding that the Defense Ministry and the police install alarm systems against Qassam rockets in their areas. The newspaper also cited Hamas threats on Ashkelon.

Ha'aretz and Yediot cited FM Silvan Shalom's denial Thursday of any Israeli interference that could have caused the death of former PLO chairman Yasser Arafat. Ha'aretz reported that the differences between Ha'aretz and The New York Times' reports on the cause of Arafat's death resulted from use of different medical evaluations by the two newspapers. Jerusalem Post quoted Bassam Abu Sharif, an aide and advisor to Arafat, as saying: "No way Arafat had AIDS ... unless somebody infected him with the AIDS virus."

Jerusalem Post reported that the Austrian Justice Ministry has appointed a state prosecutor to conduct an independent investigation into allegations that PM Sharon received a bribe from an Austrian businessman with business interests in Israel via the Vienna-based bank BAWAG.

Jerusalem Post reported that Mofaz attempted Thursday to refute a report published that day in Yediot, according to which the defense establishment would order that the IDF be used as a tool to aid Sharon politically.

Ha'aretz and Israel Radio reported that on Thursday, Israel handed over the corpse of a Hizbullah gunman who was killed two months ago in a clash with the IDF on the northern border. Israel Radio quoted an Israeli official as saying that Israel made that decision because Israel does not bargain over bodies and because Lebanon addressed Israel directly for the first time.

In an interview broadcast on Israel TV last night, Jordan's King Abdullah II stated his belief that Al Qaida has planted cells in Israel. Jerusalem Post and other media reported that Muhammad Mutlak Waridat of Dahariya, southwest of Hebron, was charged in the Judea [southern West Bank] Military Court on Thursday for undergoing military training in Pakistan and Afghanistan with Al Qaida.

Leading media cited Prison Service data that show the PA is making monthly payments of 300 to 400 shekels (around USD 66-90) to Tali Fahima, who is suspected of having provided intelligence information to terrorists to assist in the planning of terror attacks.

Leading media reported that Eliran Golan, who was due to stand trial for a series of bombings against Israeli Arabs in 2001-2003, died Thursday as the result of a suicide attempt earlier this week.

Ha'aretz reported that support for Binyamin Netanyahu among leaders in New York has plummeted recently. The newspaper quoted a senior American Jewish leader as saying that the current ties with the White House are ideal for the Jewish community.

Maariv reported that Shas party mentor Rabbi Ovadia Yosef's remarks that Hurricane Katrina is retribution for President Bush's support of disengagement, which were broadcast by many U.S. radio stations, have angered the U.S. public. Saying that Foreign Ministry representatives in the U.S. are trying to limit the flak, Maariv quoted Israel's Consul General in New York, Arye Mekel, as telling a popular New York radio station that the Rabbi's comments do not reflect Israeli public opinion.

Yediot featured the personal tragedy of the Levenhar family, whose head Shay disappeared from the 103rd floor of the North Tower in the 9/11 attack in New York City.

The banner of Yediot's weekly magazine featuring Nahum Barnea's report from New Orleans reads "Decline of the Empire." Maariv's matching heading reads: "The Storm Is on Its Way to Washington."

Ha'aretz (English Ed.) quoted Dr. Gerald Fischbach, the dean of the Columbia University faculty of medicine, as saying this week at a conference held at Bar-Ilan University that American scientists are looking to Israel for guidance on the scientific and ethical issues related to embryonic stem cell research.

Leading media reported that Google has chosen a general manager for Google Israel -- Meir Brand, who until last week served as small business manager at Microsoft Israel. One of the purposes of the establishment of Google Israel is to "pose a threat" (Ha'aretz) to Israeli search and portal sites.

A Ha'aretz/Dialogue Institute poll among Likud Party members found that 53.6 percent of respondents said that a scenario in which Binyamin Netanyahu is chosen to lead the party and Sharon resigned to create an independent list would increase the chances of Likud losing power. Some 27.5 percent said that such a scenario would increase the party's chance of winning a national election. 18.9 percent were undecided.

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1. Mideast:  
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Summary:  
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Editorial Page Editor Saul Singer wrote in conservative, independent Jerusalem Post: "If Bush does not lift a finger to save Sharon in the next few weeks, it will be hard to argue with those who said that the President's April letter was worthless."

Independent, left-leaning Ha'aretz editorialized: "After mid-September 2005, free Gaza will become the Palestinian national laboratory. If management allows the lab to blow up, it will have no hope of success, either in the January elections or in its efforts to persuade the Israeli public that it should support additional withdrawals."

Washington correspondent Nathan Guttman wrote from New Orleans in Jerusalem Post: "Bush can no longer afford to center his attention on foreign policy. A shift is inevitable and it will be felt especially in the Middle East, where American intervention both in Iraq and in Israel are at crucial stages."

Block Quotes:  
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I. "Saving Sharon"

Editorial Page Editor Saul Singer wrote in conservative, independent Jerusalem Post (September 9): "It is wrong for the U.S. to act as if the Palestinians can have their cake and eat it too. They cannot be allowed to reject a state, start a terror war, and then complain when Israel, against all odds, begins to implement the two-state solution on its own.... If Bush does not lift a finger to save Sharon in the next few weeks, it will be hard to argue with those who said that the President's April letter was worthless and therefore disengagement produced nothing meaningful for Israel. The lesson will certainly not be lost on Netanyahu, who will in any case have returned to office on the basis of opposing disengagement."

II. "New Disorder in Gaza"

Independent, left-leaning Ha'aretz editorialized (September 9): "Next week, something of great moment will take place in the Middle East: the State of Israel will leave the Gaza Strip. Although this will not be the first Israeli withdrawal from Arab territory, it is nevertheless unique: it will be Israel's first full withdrawal from Palestinian territory, and an important stage on the road to establishing an independent and sovereign Palestinian state that will live in peace alongside Israel. If one accepts the view that the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is the heart of the Israeli-Arab conflict, then the transfer of Gaza to the Palestinians, free of settlements and Israeli troops, goes far beyond a mere shortening of the lines or a tactical move a few kilometers eastward. There is something that cannot be denied: Israel is giving. What is less clear is the other side of the equation: whether the Palestinians are taking.... This week's murder of Moussa Arafat indicates that Gaza is liable to degenerate into chaos if Mahmoud Abbas and his security services do not pull themselves together, with American and Egyptian support, and firmly hold the reins of government.... The Abbas government has been shown to lack any ability to impose law and order and to meet the challenge posed by the armed groups, which are working to advance personal interests, even at the expense of the general welfare. When it suits them, these groups also operate against Israel, to pressure

Abbas to give in to their demands. After mid-September 2005, free Gaza will become the Palestinian national laboratory. If management allows the lab to blow up, it will have no hope of success, either in the January elections or in its efforts to persuade the Israeli public that it should support additional withdrawals."

## II. "Tempest in a Teacup"

Washington correspondent Nathan Guttman wrote from New Orleans in Jerusalem Post (September 9): "History has shown that when the U.S. budget becomes tight and American domestic needs grow, the voices in Congress calling to cut foreign aid become louder and more influential. And it's not only about money. America may now be entering a period of introspection -- of healing its physical and social wounds and of focusing on recovery. President Bush, criticized heavily for his belated response to the disaster, is facing tough political times.... In other words, Bush can no longer afford to center his attention on foreign policy. A shift is inevitable and it will be felt especially in the Middle East, where American intervention both in Iraq and in Israel are at crucial stages."

## 12. Aftermath of Hurricane Katrina:

### Summary:

Editor-in-Chief Lutfi Mashour wrote in independent, moderate Arabic-language Assennara: "Without comparing, this reminds us of the fall of the Berlin Wall or the collapse of the Soviet Union, which revealed back then that the shiny Soviet Union's pomegranate was nothing but rotten from the inside."

### Block Quotes:

"Unbelievable"

Editor-in-Chief Lutfi Mashour wrote in independent, moderate Arabic-language Assennara (September 9): "In the recent history we have never seen a natural disaster such as New Orleans'. That French city, which was sold by Napoleon to the Americans and was considered the pearl of the southern U.S. coast, was flooded, and thousands of people were killed.... It was first announced that the city would be torn down, and later, however, that it might not be possible to rebuild it.... All of this happens in the great United States -- the most powerful entity in the world! Could that be?? The central authorities abandoned an entire major city as if it wasn't an American city, and we don't want to get into ... reasons related to the skin color of its inhabitants and their economical condition. It's unbelievable! What shocks us most is the childish and stupid response to such a disaster and the fact that the city is destined to vanish! What's really a shock, furthermore, is that the 'greatest and powerful' country is to receive huge donations of basic products from poor counties.... Without comparing, this reminds us of the fall of the Berlin Wall or the collapse of the Soviet Union, which revealed back then that the shiny Soviet Union's pomegranate was nothing but rotten from the inside."

KURTZER